

HHS emPOWER Map: Shaping Decisions that Protect Health in Prolonged Power Outages

For the more than 2.4 million people in the United States who rely on electricity to power medical and assistive equipment, a power outage can be a matter of life or death. Advances in technology – from oxygen concentrators to electric wheelchairs – enable people to live at home independently yet prolonged power outages can force these residents to seek immediate help in local hospitals or shelters simply because the battery of their life-sustaining equipment has drained causing the equipment to fail.

To help communities prevent these life-threatening situations, the HHS emPOWER Map integrates de-identified Medicare data (so privacy is protected) with real-time NOAA weather tracking and GIS interactive mapping to highlight the number of people who use electrically dependent medical equipment in a geographic area.

In this way, the new HHS emPOWER Map strengthens situational awareness providing improved data visualization so that health professionals and emergency managers rapidly can identify the residential areas of people who rely on electrically powered durable medical equipment – populations that may be impacted and at risk during power outages. Using this dynamic tool, communities can better understand where power restoration and other emergency services are most critical at the state, territory, county and zip code levels.

The HHS emPOWER Map can inform community emergency planning and help first responders identify neighborhoods that may need rapid assistance during an emergency. Hospitals and other health care facilities can anticipate the surge in demand for care. Community businesses and civic organizations can determine how and where they could provide the greatest support, such as welcoming people with DME to recharge medical equipment batteries after power outages. Energy companies can use the HHS emPOWER Map to prioritize power restoration to help their communities protect health and save lives. The tool empowers smart decisions.

The HHS emPOWER Map was developed collaboratively by HHS' Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and is updated monthly, down to the zip code level, using Medicare claims data.

To get started, visit www.phe.gov/empowermap.

